

## Message Text

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AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 14265

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, FR  
SUBJECT: THE UDF AND THE GISCARDIAN FUTURE

SUMMARY: FORMED AS AN ELECTORAL ALLIANCE LAST JANUARY TO OFFER A BROAD, UNIFIED REFORMIST ALTERNATIVE TO THE LEFT, THE UDF WAS REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL IN THE ELECTIONS AND NOW SEEMS TO BE TAKING ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN. THIS REPORT, BASED ON RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH UDF LEADERS, PROVIDES THE THEORY BEHIND THE UDF AND ITS PLAN FOR THE FUTURE. IT MUST BE REMEMBERED, HOWEVER, THAT THE UDF FACES A VARIETY OF PROBLEMS IF IT IS TO SUCCEED, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH ARE THE CONFLICTING PERSONALITIES AND INTERESTS OF ITS LEADERS AND COMPONENT PARTIES, COMPETITION FROM THE RPR AND THE POLITICAL FORTUNES OF GISCARD AND HIS GOVERNMENT. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO COMMENT ON THE PROBABLE SUCCESS OF THE UDF ORGANIZATION, THUS FAR IT REPRESENTS GISCARD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL INITIATIVE SINCE HIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT. END SUMMARY.

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1. IN HIS BOOK FRENCH DEMOCRACY, PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING ASSERTS THE PRESENCE IN THE ELECTORATE OF A "VAST CENTRAL GROUP, ALREADY A MAJORITY, CHARACTERIZED BY A COMPORTMENT, A STYLE OF LIFE, AN EDUCATION, A WAY OF VIEWING THE WORLD, A CULTURE AND ASPIRATIONS WHICH ARE TENDING TO BECOME HOMOGENEOUS". ACCORDING

TO GISCARD, THIS GROUP WHICH EXTENDS FROM THE CENTER RIGHT (LEFT WING OF THE RPR), TO THE CENTER LEFT (RIGHT WING OF THE PS), DESIRES SIGNIFICANT REFORMS BASED ON SOCIAL CONCERNS, BUT REJECTS MARXIST DOGMA AND MASSIVE RESTRUCTURING OF FRENCH SOCIETY. THE UDF (UNION POUR LA DEMOCRATIE FRANCAISE) IS TO SERVE AS THE VEHICLE FOR MOBILIZING THIS CENTER IN SUPPORT OF GISCARD.

2. ORGANIZATIONS: ORIGINALLY ESTABLISHED AS AN ELECTORAL COALITION, THE UDF IS NOW TO BE ESTABLISHED AS AN ORGANIZATION IN ITS OWN RIGHT. MICHEL PINTON, GENERAL DELEGATE AND PRIMARY ORGANIZER OF THE UDF, TOLD EMBOFFS LAST WEEK THAT THE WRITING OF THE STATUTES IS THE FIRST POLITICAL HURDLE TO BE OVERCOME. THEY MUST BE WRITTEN IN A SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE MANNER AS TO ALLOW FOR A LOOSE FEDERATION OF THE COMPONENT POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE INITIAL STAGES OF FORMATION WHILE LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE STRONG GISCARDIAN ORGANIZATION THE UDF IS INTENDED TO BECOME. THE UDF IS ENVISIONED AS HAVING AN ORGANIZATION EXTENDING DOWN TO THE DISTRICT LEVEL. AT EACH LEVEL THERE IS TO BE A COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMPONENT PARTY ORGANIZATIONS (MAINLY PR, CDS AND RADICALS) AND A UDF FUNCTIONARY. AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, THE UDF WILL HAVE ITS OWN SECRETARIAT INDEPENDENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS BUT

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GOVERNED BY A JOINT COMMITTEE. JEAN LECANUET (CDS) IS THE PRESIDENT AND THERE ARE VICE PRESIDENTS FROM THE PR, CDS AND RADICALS. AT THE LOWER LEVELS, THE NATURE AND STRENGTH OF THE UDF WILL DEPEND UPON THE PRESENCE, STRENGTH AND COOPERATIVENESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTIES. THE OBJECTIVE, HOWEVER, IS TO BUILD A NATIONAL UDF ORGANIZATION WITH SOME FORM OF REPRESENTATION IN EVERY DISTRICT BY THE ELECTIONS IN MAY (CANTONALS) AND JUNE (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT) OF NEXT YEAR. THE UDF WILL PRESENT SLATES OF CANDIDATES FOR BOTH ELECTIONS.

3. THE PROBLEMS: THE UDF IS INTENDED TO COPE WITH THREE MAJOR PROBLEMS: (A) ORGANIZING AND UNITING A HISTORICALLY DIVIDED CENTER INTO A COHERENT, EFFECTIVE POLITICAL FORCE; (B) CREATING AND/OR MOBILIZING A GISCARDIAN NATIONAL BASE; AND (C) CREATING A POLITICAL MACHINE TO SUPPORT GISCARD IN HIS EFFORT TO ALTER THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE OF FRANCE OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.

4. A SPLINTERED CENTER: THE UDF PRESENTLY IS MADE UP OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY (PR), THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL

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DEMOCRATS (CDS), THE RADICAL SOCIALISTS (RADICALS),  
THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF FRANCE (MSDF),  
THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY (MSD), THE CHRISTIAN  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY (CD) AND, FOR THE MOMENT, SOME OF  
THE CENTER FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENTS (CNI). THE PR  
IS BY FAR THE LARGEST WITH ABOUT 14 PERCENT OF THE  
NATIONAL VOTE (THE CDS - 5 PERCENT, RADICALS -  
2 PERCENT, ETC.). HISTORICALLY, ATTEMPTS TO UNIFY  
THE CENTER HAVE FOUNDED ON A COMBINATION OF PER-  
SONALITY CONFLICTS AND DIFFERING PROGRAMS. THE  
CREATION OF THE UDF EFFECTIVELY MAKES GISCARD THE  
SPIRITUAL LEADER OF THE COMPONENT PARTIES (REDUCING THE  
IMPORTANCE OF THE PERSONALITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTY  
LEADERS) AND THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM PROVIDES THE  
COMMON GROUND FOR THEIR INDIVIDUAL PARTY PROGRAMS.  
THE UDF CONTROLS THE PRESIDENCY, THE PRIME MINISTRY,  
THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS LEVERS OF POWER. THERE ARE  
SUFFICIENT "SPOILS" AND EACH PARTY HAS A VESTED INTER-  
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EST IN UNITY. ALSO, A GISCARDIAN GENERATION IS SLOWLY ASSUMING POWER WITHIN THE PARTIES AND THEIR POLITICAL FUTURES ARE LINKED TO THE PRESIDENT'S. THUS A BASIS FOR UNITY EXISTS.

5. A POPULAR BASE: AS CAN BE NOTED FROM THE VOTING PERCENTAGES, NONE OF THE COMPONENT PARTIES OF THE UDF HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING A LARGE POPULAR BASE. IN RECENT POLLS, HOWEVER, GISCARD'S POPULARITY IS BETWEEN 55 AND 60 PERCENT, I.E., THAT CENTER GROUP WHICH COMPRISES THE UDF TARGET. THE PROBLEM IS HOW TO MOBILIZE GISCARD'S SUPPORT, WHICH GREATLY EXCEEDS THAT OF ALL THE COMPONENT PARTIES OF THE UDF. THE UDF INTENDS TO CREATE ITS OWN ORGANIZATION, BASED DIRECTLY ON GISCARD'S APPEAL AND OPERATING INDEPENDENTLY OF THE OTHER PARTY ORGANIZATIONS. INDIVIDUALS WILL BE ABLE TO JOIN THE UDF WITHOUT JOINING ANY OF ITS COMPONENT PARTIES. IN AREAS DOMINATED BY ONE OF THE UDF PARTIES, THE UDF WILL CONCENTRATE ON THOSE VOTERS TO WHOM THE DOMINANT PARTY CANNOT OR DOES NOT APPEAL. IN AREAS WHERE THE UDF PARTIES ARE WEAK OR NOT REPRESENTED, THE UDF WILL OFFER THE GISCARDIAN ALTERNATIVE. THE UDF WILL BE SEEKING, NEW YOUNG (AND HOPEFULLY MORE AGGRESSIVE) MILITANTS, WHO WILL BE WILLING TO WORK AND EXPAND THE PARTY'S BASE. IN MANY AREAS, THE LOCAL LEADERSHIP OF THE UDF PARTIES IS OLDER AND MORE TRADITIONAL. THE UDF WILL ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP A NEWER, MORE DYNAMIC IMAGE. THIS OF COURSE CAUSES PROBLEMS FOR THE COMPONENT PARTIES WHO ALSO BASE THEIR POLITICAL APPEAL AT LEAST IN PART ON THEIR SUPPORT OF GISCARD AND WHO WILL BE COMPETING WITH THE UDF FOR MEMBERS, MONEY AND TO SOME EXTENT IN PROGRAMS.

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6. INTERNAL RESISTANCE: THE MILITANTS AND LOCAL REPUBLICAN PARTY OFFICIALS ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE UDF PRESENCE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THE PR'S APPEAL IS ALSO BASED ON ITS IMAGE AS THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY. HOW THEN DO THEY EXPLAIN THE UDF'S PRESENCE ON THE LOCAL SCENE TO THEIR SUPPORTERS? AT A RECENT MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, OPPOSITION TO THE FORMATION OF THE UDF AT THE LOCAL LEVEL WAS VOICED BY NUMEROUS LOCAL DELEGATES. THE RESPONSE OF THE PR LEADERSHIP - PARTICULARLY STRONG FROM MINISTER OF INTERIOR BONNET AND FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL SOISSON - WAS (A) STOP CRYING, IT IS OUR CREATION, WE CONTROL

IT, IT IS DESIGNED TO EXPAND THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL BASE, SO DON'T FIGHT IT. (B) WE CONTROL THE UDF AT EVERY LEVEL THROUGH THE UDF COMMITTEES, THUS IT WILL BE RUN IN EACH CIRCUMSCRIPTION IN AN APPROPRIATE MANNER. THE CDS MILITANTS ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE LOSS OF THEIR IMAGE AS THE "LEFT WING" OF THE MAJORITY; THEY ALSO FEAR BEING SWALLOWED BY THE PR DOMINATED UDF ORGANIZATION. THE CDS' LEADERSHIP JUSTIFIES THEIR PARTICIPATION ON THE FOLLOWING: (A) IF THE UDF IS SUCCESSFUL, WE WILL HAVE MORE POWER (AND POSITIONS) THAN WE WOULD WITH OUR 5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN AN RPR-DOMINATED MAJORITY; (B) IN ORDER TO BUILD THIS CENTER MAJORITY (APPEAL TO THE LEFT), THE UDF WILL HAVE TO IMPLEMENT SUBSTANTIAL PORTIONS OF THE CDS' PROGRAM; AND (C) IF THINGS LOOK BAD, WE CAN PULL OUT. THE UDF LEADERSHIP IS WELL AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS THAT THE UDF PRESENTS TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL PARTIES AND IS PROCEEDING CAUTIOUSLY.

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7. A POLITICAL MACHINE: GISCARD HAS INCREASED POWER AND NOW INTENDS TO USE IT TO BUILD HIS SUPPORT. WITHIN THE COMPONENT PARTIES OF THE UDF, THOSE WHO

WORK TO BUILD GISCARD'S MACHINE WILL RECEIVE THE KEY POSITIONS IN THE PARTY AND IN THE GOVERNMENT. WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, THE UDF MEMBERS WILL HOLD THE KEY POSITIONS AND GAULLISTS WHO COOPERATE WILL RECEIVE THEIR FAIR SHARE. DESCRIBING THE PURGE OF CHIRAC SUPPORTERS IN THE GOVERNMENT, JEAN PIERRE PREVOST (ADVISOR TO UDF PRESIDENT LECANUET) NOTED THAT IN THE PRESENT REORGANIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, "CHIRAC IS LOSING PEOPLE (POSITIONS) EVERYDAY". IN FULFILLING GISCARD'S LONG TERM GOALS, UDF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND DEPUTIES WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO WORK WITH THE OPPOSITION (PS/MRG) TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE TO ENCOURAGE THEIR SUPPORT AND WILLINGNESS TO PARTICI- PATE IN THE GOVERNING PROCESS. THE UDF WILL ATTEMPT

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TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF THE MODERATE OPPOSITION, OR FAILING THAT, TO OFFER A REFUGE FROM THE ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS.

8. CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE: GISCARD'S GOAL REMAINS TO GOVERN FROM THE CENTER, WEAKEN THE POLITICAL EXTREMES, AND ALLOW EVENTUALLY FOR SOME FORM OF COOPERATION WITH THE MODERATE OPPOSITION. THE PS HAVING BROKEN THE COMMUNIST DOMINATION OF THE LEFT'S ELECTORATE, THE UDF MUST NOW GAIN CONTROL OF THE MAJORITY'S ELECTORATE. IN THEORY, IF THE UDF AND PS CAN SHIFT POWER TO THE CENTER, COOPERATION WOULD BE POSSIBLE. THE GAULLISTS AND COMMUNISTS WOULD BE RELEGATED TO A SECOND POSITION, AND FRANCE COULD PARTICIPATE IN THE GENERAL SOCIAL- DEMOCRATIC TREND OF DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN EUROPE.

9. CONCLUSION: THE FORMATION OF THE UDF AS AN ORGANIZATION IS PROCEEDING SLOWLY AS THE INDIVIDUAL LEADERS REFINE THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE UDF AND THOSE BETWEEN THE UDF AND THE INDIVIDUAL PARTIES. THIS EFFORT TO CREATE A GENUINELY GISCARDIAN POLITICAL MACHINE OUT OF AN ELECTORAL ALLIANCE, IN COMPETITION WITH BOTH A POWERFUL ALLY AND A POWERFUL OPPOSITION NEITHER ONE OF WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO ACQUIESCE IN ITS DEVELOPMENT, WILL REQUIRE VERY CAREFUL PLANNING AND VERY FEW MISTAKES. THUS FAR GI SCARD AND THE UDF LEADERSHIP HAVE DONE QUITE WELL. BUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STRONG CENTER POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BROAD POPULAR BASE FOR ITS SUPPORT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE. THE FACT THAT THE UDF PEOPLE ARE MOVING CAUTIOUSLY AND APPARENTLY HAVE LEARNED FROM CENTRIST MISTAKES IN THE PAST IS A POINT IN THEIR FAVOR. MANY HURDLES REMAIN, AND AT EACH ONE

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THE CONSTITUENT PARTIES MUST FIND A COMPROMISE SOLUTION  
WHICH GIVES EACH ONE A FAIR SHARE OF THE POLITICAL PIE.  
THIS WILL BE A DELICATE TASK, LESS UPHILL THAN IN THE  
PAST PERHAPS BUT NEVERTHELESS ONE DEMANDING CONSTANT  
ATTENTION AND COOPERATION TO AVOID THE INEVITABLE  
PITFALLS.

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## Message Attributes

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